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ABSTRACT

Intended primarily for preservice and beginning teachers, this handbook can also be used by inservice teachers, school administrators, and college professors as an aid in helping new teachers meet the challenges of the opening days of the school year. The handbook begins with instructions for getting acquainted with available instructional resources; facilities, personnel, services; district and school rules, procedures, and policies; the children; the district; and the community's resources. Next, the handbook presents outlined guidance on the following topics: effective room arrangements, decorations, and materials; discipline, control, and management; routines and procedures; class lists; home-school communication; folders for substitute teachers; celebrations; and pupil identification methods. The handbook also includes instructions to new teachers about making plans and schedules and tentatively determining pupils' skill levels. The handbook concludes with bibliographies of articles and books about the first year of teaching (9 entries) and about classroom management and discipline (46 entries). (SB)

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# Before School Starts:

# A Handbook For New Elementary Rural/Small School Teachers

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# BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

# A HANDBOOK FOR NEW ELEMENTARY

# RURAL/SMALL SCHOOL TEACHERS

by

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March 1984

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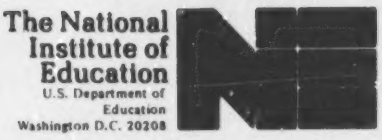


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## FORWARD

Nothing fully prepares a new teacher for that first day in the classroom. Everything the teacher has experienced previously should help. Methods, contents courses, and other activities from teacher preparation programs should help. Are there specific strategies, however, that new teachers, or teachers new to rural areas, can use to help ensure that they bring the greatest possible preparation and understanding to that first day?

This handbook by Leo Schell and Paul Burden provides many examples of things teachers can do in advance to lead to confident mastery of their classroom environment. The handbook builds on experiences of 300 teachers from various sized districts in Kansas. A bibliography on classroom management and discussion is included, for example, since that was an area identified by the teachers as causing them initial insecurity and on-going problems.

School administrators, college professors, and inservice teachers can also benefit from the accumulated wisdom provided. In this time of public focus on educational effectiveness, experienced educators should seek to share the practical, positive assistance provided in this handbook with inexperienced teachers so that overall classroom opportunities for American's rural children can be enhanced.

Betty Rose D. Rios
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## PREFACE

Rural and small school administrators face several challenges in organizing and implementing a teacher induction program that administrators in large schools or districts may not face. Not only is there no central administrator to organize and conduct such a program, but with only an occasional new teacher there may not be enough participants to form a group. Limited resources, including a lack of program materials, compound the difficulties. However, sound and practical resource materials will assist rural and small school administrators in developing and delivering an adequate induction program for beginning teachers. Such resource materials could also be used by beginning teachers themselves as aids in making preparations and decisions for the start of the school year.

In an effort to develop a resource handbook for administrators and beginning teachers, 300 experienced teachers in various sized districts in Kansas were surveyed and asked to list several crucial things an inexperienced teacher should do before the first day of school. The 1,110 suggestions that were received seemed to fall into 3 categories, which serve as chapter titles in this handbook: Becoming Acquainted, Classroom Environment and Organization, and Instructional Planning. Each chapter provides a detailed summary of related suggestions.

## I. USING THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook can be used by preservice teachers and beginning teachers, as well as by school administrators, inservice teachers, and college professors who seek to help them.

**A. Preservice Teachers.** Teacher education courses and field experiences often do not prepare student teachers for the unique circumstances that beginning teachers must deal with at the start of their first year of teaching. A handbook such as this could be used to inform preservice teachers of issues they must consider before their first year of teaching. Additional information about and assistance with these issues could then be sought as the individual teacher deemed necessary or desirable. In addition, field experiences could be more useful if objectives were broadened to allow examination of some of these induction concerns.

**B. Beginning Teachers.** In order to prevent being overwhelmed by the number and magnitude of the tasks they must complete, beginning teachers should be aware of both the general topics they must consider and the specific tasks they must perform before the pupils arrive. In most small or rural schools, beginning teachers cannot wait for a formal induction program to provide ideas of how to begin--they must take the initiative. This handbook can be useful for both general and specific aspects.

In order to make best use of this handbook, beginning teachers should:

1. Read this handbook to get a general overview of how best to prepare themselves.

2. As soon as possible, even two to three months before school begins, acquire a complete set of all assigned instructional materials. Included in this handbook are specific suggestions for becoming familiar with these materials and for using them to formulate long-range plans.

3. Get copies of any available faculty handbooks or school district policies and procedures manuals.

4. Work through this handbook in a systematic fashion. It is written in a checklist format so that each item can be checked when completed. Begin with those items that require the most attention or time.

5. Work on items in proportion to their significance. For example, room arrangement and bulletin boards shouldn't take precedence over familiarizing yourself with assigned instructional materials and preparing various kinds of plans.

6. Consult others. Beginning teachers should never view it as a weakness to ask other teachers--no matter what grade or subject they teach--for advice or ideas. The principal should also play an active part in this program by taking the lead in helping the beginning teacher prepare for the year. The beginning teacher should respectfully take the initiative if the principal does not take the lead in such preparation.

7. Read books on classroom management and discipline. Additional materials which provide suggestions for managing the classroom, instruction, and student behavior are available. The bibliography at the end of this handbook includes a list of some of the most useful references in these areas.

8. Read books that provide insight into what teachers deal with in their first year. Several references providing this information are listed in a separate bibliography.

C. **Inservice Teachers.** Experienced teachers can assist beginning teachers in a variety of ways. The specific issues identified in this handbook could provide focal points for experienced teachers to share their insights, experience, and expertise with beginning teachers.

D. **School Administrators.** Based on the study represented here and other research on teacher induction, rural and small school administrators should:

1. Recognize the scope and difficulty of the tasks that the beginning teacher must complete. In addition to the many professional decisions and adjustments that a beginning teacher must make, there are many personal and social changes that often must be made (e.g., finding a new place to live; getting settled; getting acquainted with a new community; finding new friends; getting used to being away from friends, from college, and perhaps from family members). Adequately preparing for the start of school is far more complicated than most educators have previously believed.

2. Recognize that preparing for the school year can be enormously time consuming. The number of items to be attended to demands that the induction process be begun as early as possible. For example, respondents repeatedly recommended that newly hired teachers be given the assigned instructional materials two or three months before school starts. A set of preparation guidelines such as those provided in this handbook should be provided equally early to direct teachers in their preparation.

3. Recognize that beginning teachers need specific suggestions on how best to prepare for the school year. Even though these teachers have completed a teacher education program, preparation for the beginning days of the school year is usually not included in these programs. They know how to teach, but they may not know how to prepare thoroughly for the beginning of the school year. The beginning of the year is too crucial for the education profession to permit floundering, aimless wandering, or making incorrect decisions. Beginning teachers should not have to learn by trial and error; they deserve practical, feasible, realistic suggestions like those contained in this handbook.

4. Recognize that many administrators need specific information about what a newly hired teacher needs to know and do. Without specific induction information, administrators may omit some vital information, overemphasize some trivial aspects, or provide inadequate time or assistance. A written guide is necessary.

5. Recognize that administrators need to be directly involved in the induction process in a variety of ways. Administrators may:

a. Help formulate a daily and weekly schedule. In this day of numerous special teachers and "pull-out" programs, new teachers are unable to do this independently.

b. Provide help in drawing up a long-range schedule for several curricular areas. Then, for the first unit in these areas, provide help by suggesting possible learning activities or resources in the school or community that the new teacher is unlikely to know.

c. Provide information about the capabilities of the class as a whole as well as about specific children. Relate this information to instructional planning and resources.

d. Arrange specific opportunities for the new teacher to meet other personnel in non-working as well as working situations (e.g., during coffee breaks and lunches).

e. Assist the beginning teacher in pupil evaluation and the grading procedure. This is a task that inexperienced teachers often have had little responsibility for or experience with during student teaching. Thus, they need special help with it.

Administrators should not just give information or volunteer help. They should sit down with the new teacher to review some of the most essential tasks to see that adequate planning and preparation are done.

**E. College Professors.** The induction information contained in this handbook could serve as the basis to revise objectives for teacher education course content and field experiences to deal with the difficulties beginning teachers typically experience. The objectives of field experiences should be broadened to enable students to become familiar with aspects of the school environment such as instructional resources; school facilities, personnel, and service; school rules and procedures; the children; the district; and community resources. Field experiences should provide opportunities for students to see how experienced teachers arrange classrooms, organize materials, handle discipline problems, and deal with other aspects of classroom management. Students should become familiar with short- and long-term planning and pupil assessment.

**F. Summary.** The education profession has probably underestimated the scope and difficulty of the tasks faced by the inexperienced teacher in preparing for the beginning of the school year. There is no satisfactory way that a teacher who is not well-prepared in advance can catch up after school has started. If the task is not done right the first time, the teacher can never turn back the calendar, undo the wrong, and do it correctly. What's done is done. Beginning teachers need help before school begins. This handbook can serve as a valuable aid in helping beginning teachers meet the challenges of the opening days of the school year.

## II. BECOMING ACQUAINTED

The first step in preparing to begin the school year is to become thoroughly familiar with the total teaching environment: room, school, other teachers, children, resources, and the community. Each of these is vitally important in determining how to begin the school year. The more knowledgeable beginning teachers are about each of these, the more confident they will feel about their jobs and the less time they will need to devote to them after school begins. This is important because frequently the first few weeks of teaching are so demanding that there is little time available to explore these important areas.

Beginning teachers have a responsibility that they never had during student teaching; they must plan and organize numerous curricular areas--mathematics, science, reading, language arts, social studies, and others--for the whole year. Therefore, it is imperative that beginning teachers have a good grasp of the content to be taught in each subject. As early as possible, even two months before school begins, copies of all assigned materials (textbooks, teacher manuals, workbooks, etc.) should be gathered and studied (suggestions on making long-range schedules will be discussed in a later section).

Next, becoming familiar with the physical facility is obviously important. But since beginning teachers will be part of a "team," it is even more important that they get acquainted with all the other staff members--from teachers to cooks. In small and rural schools, it is important to know teachers from the junior and senior high schools as well as from other elementary schools in the district.

The school district will have numerous procedures and policies that teachers and pupils must follow. Some involve whether treats can be brought for birthday parties while others will be about more consequential matters such as what kind of discipline is permitted or what the principal's expectations are concerning lesson plans. Knowledge of these policies can save time and embarrassment and can result in more effective decision-making and better understanding of the teacher's role and position in the total scheme of the system.

However, schools do not operate in a vacuum; they are part and parcel of the community in which they are located. Therefore, the more beginning teachers know about the community and the school district, the better they will understand pupils and their parents, others with whom they work, and even the programs and expectations of the school. Everything from the size of the district and the most common employment within it to the quality of the pupils' housing is important to know. This is especially true for rural communities which are usually closely knit.

Quality education involves more than learning from textbooks. A diverse array of resources is available to enrich learning experiences in even the most isolated communities. Beginning teachers should take the initiative to acquire this information and then to relate it to the topics that will be taught. Having this information before school starts will help in planning a wide range of high-quality learning experiences.

**A. Instructional Resources.** As early as possible, even during the summer, become familiar with all assigned and available instructional resources. The inexperienced teacher should not be afraid to ask for assistance.

1. Obtain and study copies of all assigned and available pupil textbooks and workbooks and/or teacher guides to learn:

   a. General and specific instructional goals.

   b. Subject matter to be taught.

   c. Suggested and possible instructional strategies and activities.

   d. Your own and the texts' strengths and deficiencies.

   e. Manuscript and/or cursive letter forms to be used.

   f. Possible games, devices, visual aids, learning centers, bulletin boards, and ditto sheets that you could make.

   g. Available tests.

   h. "Breadth" of suggestions--remedial, enrichment, review.

   i. Possible overlap or integration of curricular areas.

2. Occasionally rural schools have curriculum guides. Ask about them. Examine any of them to learn:

   a. General and specific instructional goals.

   b. Instructional topics.

   c. Scope and sequence of skills for curricular areas.

   d. Suggested instructional activities.

3. Ask about any special or experimental instructional programs. Examples include the following:

   a. Career education.

   b. Economic education.

   c. Energy education.

   d. Art appreciation.

   e. Assertive discipline.

   f. Reading awards.

   g. Head Start.

   h. "Hands-on" science.

If beginning teachers are involved in any of these programs, they may need to spend extra time preparing for them. Even if not involved, these teachers may be able to use them in some way to improve their instruction.

4. Learn what supplemental resources are available. Among these may the following:

   a. Commercial ditto masters accompanying textbooks.

   b. Library and/or media resources appropriate to topics to be taught during the first several weeks. Order or reserve several.

5. Planning long-range schedules is discussed later in this handbook.

## B. Facilities, Personnel, and Services

1. Become familiar with the classroom. You should:

   a. Examine and inventory available materials. Resupply if needed.

   b. Determine storage areas. Put materials from each subject in a separate area.

   c. Decide on location of teacher's and pupils' desks, bookcases, display tables, room library, record player, and other materials.

   Specific suggestions are given later in this handbook.

2. Become acquainted with the school building and grounds. Facilities may include:

   a. Rooms for special classes such as music, remedial reading, speech therapy, etc.

   b. Store rooms.

   c. Recess play areas.

   d. Duplication facilities.

   e. Fire alarms and extinguishers.

3. Meet as many fellow teachers as possible, even those at the junior and senior high schools. Engage them in different ways, such as:

   a. Drink coffee together.

   b. Go out to lunch together.

   c. Visit other rooms.

   d. Ask questions.

4. Learn about special personnel within the school. These may include any of the following:

   a. Remedial reading.

   b. Vocal/instrumental music.

   c. Physical education.

   d. Art.

   e. English as a second language.

   f. Foreign language.

   g. Speech therapy.

   h. Special education.

   i. Library/media center.

   j. Paraprofessionals/teacher aides.

5. Learn about central office personnel, who may include:

   a. School psychologist.

   b. Reading resource teacher.

   c. Media director.

6. Learn about the availability of services, schedules, and referral procedures for personnel and areas listed above. If there is a media catalog available, obtain it.

7. Become acquainted with <u>all</u> support staff members, even at the junior and senior high schools:

   a. Secretaries.

   b. Custodians.

   c. Cooks.

   d. Bus drivers.

8. Learn about special school services for students from low-income families. Such services may include:

   a. Medical or dental help.

   b. Clothing distribution.

   c. Funds for <u>Weekly Reader</u> subscriptions, etc.

d. Remission of textbook rental fees.

e. Breakfast programs.

f. Volunteer after-school tutoring programs.

C. **District and School Rules, Procedures, and Policies**

1. Some rural schools assign to their teachers duties which are not expected of urban teachers. Examples are keeping time at basketball games and selling tickets at plays. Identify all extra responsibilities and duties, such as:

a. Playground duty.

b. Lunchroom duty.

c. Lunch money.

d. Bus loading/unloading.

e. Open house.

f. PTA meetings.

g. Committee membership.

h. Extracurricular activities, clubs, organizations, athletics, etc.

2. Become thoroughly familiar with school procedures and policies concerning students. These may be included in a school or district handbook. If so, obtain a copy. Items covered may include:

a. Fire and tornado drills.

b. Reporting absences and attendance.

c. Handling student illness or injury during school.

d. Daily schedule (lunch, dismissal, etc.)

e. Use of tools and equipment.

f. Discipline--what is prohibited, what is permissible, and under what conditions.

g. Regular newsletters to parents.

3. Learn about school procedures concerning teachers. These may also be outlined in a school or district handbook and will cover:

a. Unexpected illness.

b. Personal leave (medical or business reasons).

c. Room parties.

d. Room helpers (mothers).

e. Field trips (number allowed, school-provided transportation, permission, etc.).

f. Funds for materials and projects.

g. Teacher aides.

h. Faculty meetings.

i. Use of office telephone.

j. Mail delivery.

k. Lesson plans.

l. "Chain of command" to follow in case of complaint.

m. Records to be kept, forms to be filed, etc.

n. Handling money.

o. Lost and found.

p. Contents of cumulative record folders.

4. Learn standards of behavior for building, halls, restrooms, lunchrooms, playground, bus, etc., including dress code for both students and teachers.

5. Determine the availability of paraprofessionals or teacher aides. Consult the principal or several experienced teachers for suggestions when deciding how best to use them.

D. **The Children**

1. Check with the school administrator to determine what information can be gathered about students before the start of the school year.

2. Check with the school administrator to determine what information can be examined concerning the students.

3. Study the cumulative records for each child.

   a. Make a frequency distribution of achievement in areas such as reading and math.

      (1) Use standardized test scores and/or data on level of book completed.

      (2) Note range, mean, and composition of class. Use this data to tentatively answer questions such as:

         (a) Is the group about average in reading, math, spelling, etc.?

         (b) Will grade-level texts be appropriate?

         (c) Is there a larger-than-expected number of high or low achievers?

         (d) Do there seem to be some tentative groups for reading and other curricula areas?

      (3) Consider these data as "indicators," not "absolutes!"

   b. Study each child's folder.

      (1) Study the photographs; try to learn names.

      (2) Learn about family/home situations. Note names of parents/guardians. Don't assume same last name as child's.

      (3) Note any outstanding strengths, weaknesses, interests, capabilities, etc., both academic and non-academic.

      (4) Record birthdays on room calendar.

      (5) Notice if child was in any special programs--LD, speech therapy, gifted, EMR, etc.

      (6) Notice any health, physical, medical, or learning problems.

      (7) Note any mainstreamed children, which subjects they will study in your room, etc.

      (8) Determine if there are any children who, for religious reasons:

         (a) Cannot participate in some school activities or have some restrictions on them. (Some religions don't take part in the flag salute; some don't use medical services or physicians; some don't observe the religious aspect of Christmas, etc.)

         (b) Will participate in some religious holidays or activities not covered by the regular school calendar.

c. Talk with the children's former teachers about:

(1) Children's needs, interests, and abilities.

(2) Classroom hints and techniques.

d. Talk with building principal about:

(1) Children in general.

(2) Specific children.

e. Cautions: Try to be objective. Try not to form negative opinions about children. Consider each child capable and special and give the child many opportunities to prove his/her worth.

f. Prepare a file folder for each child in which to keep room records, samples of child's work, and other information.

B. The District

1. Study a map of the district.

2. Learn about:

a. Most common occupations in the community and the occupations of your students' parents.

b. Degree of transiency in community.

c. Private and/or parochial schools--who attends them and how public school enrollment is affected.

3. Drive through the district and locate homes of your students. Note any obvious things that would help you better understand your students and the community, such as the following:

a. Size and newness of house.

b. Degree of isolation.

c. General upkeep (paint, etc.)

d. Landscaping and grounds.

e. Number and kind of vehicles.

f. Items of interest such as TV satellite dish, orchard, auto repair garage, in-home business, etc.

4. Find out bus "pick-up" and "let-off" times as well as length of time children spend on a bus. This may help you understand how early children have to get up, how early they must go to bed, or what they've done before they get to school.

5. Talk with the school administrator to obtain guidance about how much information to gather about the district. Being too inquisitive may lead to problems for the inexperienced teacher.

## F. The Community's Resources

1. Learn about resources in the community which can enrich your learning experiences. Many rural communities have more than you might expect. Examples include:

   a. Museums, historical sites, and libraries.

   b. Places of business that could give tours such as banks, grain elevators, industries, post office, dairies, orchards, airports, lumber yards, grocery stores, water plant, newspapers, etc.

   c. Organizations such as historical societies, Chamber of Commerce, etc.

2. Learn about people in the community who can provide special services to supplement your instruction. These may include:

   a. Talents and hobbies such as:

      (1) Weaving.

      (2) Rock collecting.

      (3) Unusual pets.

      (4) Arts and crafts.

      (5) Amateur radio.

      (6) Astronomy.

   b. Information for projects, which might include study of:

      (1) Photos/movies of other countries, souvenirs, and memorabilia.

      (2) Vocations: County Extension and HDU agents, mechanics, accountants, florists, salespersons, masons, equipment operators, meteorologists, veterinarians, law enforcement officers, attorneys, bankers, etc. Rural communities frequently have a number of these people whose knowledge can be used to enrich learning.

3. Ask fellow teachers/administrators, parents, neighbors, and others for support. In most rural communities, such resources and people are well known.

   a. Get responses in writing. Compile a list of resources and the people who can help when exploring certain topics.

   b. Survey parents to ask about their own resources and what they'd recommend. Use a prepared questionnaire. It is often helpful for inexperienced teachers to wait until they feel accepted before sending out surveys.

4. List tentative classroom visitors and field trips.

   a. Coordinate these with major curricular topics.

   b. Determine school policy on number of field trips permitted a year, availability of transportation, number of required adult sponsors, and other details.

## III. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Teachers who succeed in teaching are invariably organized and efficient. Those who are not find that the demands of teaching consume more than the available time. The whole purpose of this handbook is to provide inexperienced teachers with an organized structure that will help them be efficient.

Room arrangement must be functional. Traffic must flow smoothly, vision must not be blocked, cupboards and chalkboards should not be blocked, and pupils' desk arrangement should facilitate control and discipline. One experienced teacher said, "At the beginning, KISS (Keep it simple, stupid)." If only a few simple traditional activities are scheduled for the first week, the room arrangement can be correspondingly simple. Teachers can add to or rearrange furniture as they gain confidence and control.

Children react to their surroundings. Clutter breeds clutter, dullness contributes to apathy, and an overly "busy" room can be distracting. Neither neglect nor over-do your efforts to make the room attractive.

Be careful of spending money for a rocking chair for the reading center, an aquarium or a hamster cage, or even plants. Buy only what is needed or what can be taken care of. (Does the room have enough light for a Boston fern? Who will take care of the tropical fish at Christmas time?)

Investigate school rules and/or state law before acquiring carpet or carpet samples. Some schools do not like them as they are hard to clean, and some fire marshals prohibit them because they may produce quantities of toxic smoke in a fire.

Creating a suitable environment provides an excellent opportunity to ask other teachers for ideas: With what room arrangement do they like to begin the year? What kinds of bulletin board displays seem most appropriate? Are there any things not to do (for example, pound nails in the wall)? In the process of getting some sound ideas, teachers will also become better acquainted with colleagues.

Do not overlook another source of information: back issues of Instructor magazine. Nearly all schools subscribe, and the annual back-to-school issue has several illustrations of bulletin boards. Make sure bulletin boards are suitable for more than a week. Teachers are too busy in the first few weeks to make new ones each week.

Materials other than assigned textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets are needed for quality elementary instruction. By collecting and organizing these before school begins, inexperienced teachers will be able to plan richer, more varied lessons and also will avoid rushing around in last-minute desperation the night before a lesson trying to locate old magazines, scraps of wallpaper, or other materials.

Determine an effective method for organizing the various materials you accumulate. Boxes, envelopes, file folders, notebooks, and sacks can each serve a unique purpose.

Finally, do not give this task more time than it deserves. Becoming familiar with the textbooks and making long-range and daily lesson plans are far more important than having the most attractive room in the school.

The biggest fear most inexperienced teachers have is that of pupil discipline. Discipline problems are usually minimal if teachers are organized, have appropriate learning experiences, and are confidently in charge.

During student teaching, student teachers often merely adopt the procedures and routines that cooperating teachers have already established. Inexperienced teachers must establish their own procedures. Many of them will not require intensive thought, but a few, such as formulating a grading system that is objective, fair, reliable, and corresponds to the school's reporting system, can be quite difficult. Other teachers can be of great help as sources for ideas and also as evaluators of your plan.

A large part of the school day is spent in routine procedures such as distributing papers and lining up. If these are not efficient, a large amount of time that could have been better used in teaching and learning can be lost. Therefore, organization in the classroom is not merely a matter of things running smoothly but more a matter of the quality of pupil learning. The amount of time available is too short to waste any of it. Suggestions in this section should help teachers be more efficient. Research has repeatedly shown that the home is one of the most influential variables in pupil learning. Therefore, the best relationship possible should be developed with the home. Most rural communities are highly school-oriented, and parents/guardians are zealously cooperative. Take advantage of and encourage this spirit by communicating with the home. This can be accomplished in several ways.

Special circumstances, such as teacher's absence or a pupil's birthday, which may also occur during the first week or two of school, require some consideration, too.

This handbook cannot provide all of the specific aspects of classroom management and discipline inexperienced teachers need to consider to begin the school year efficiently and effectively, but a lengthy bibliography of books on these topics concludes this handbook. Schools sometimes have one or more of these references in their professional libraries or other teachers or the principal may have them. Ask.

## A. Room Arrangement

1. Determine room arrangement.

   a. Location of teacher's desk:

   b. Arrangement of pupils' desks. For an inexperienced teacher, traditional rows for the first few weeks may best create an atmosphere most conducive to the fewest number of discipline problems.

c. Location of and kinds of study centers:

(1) Reading tables (group instruction).

(2) Reading center (independent reading).

(3) Learning centers, if any.

A note about the use of centers: Most experienced teachers caution NOT to use centers during the first couple of weeks or so until teacher control has been established.

d. Location of additional furniture:

(1) File cabinet.

(2) Display tables.

Make sure the arrangement will work from week to week even though centers and special projects may change.

2. Ask about the availability of any extra furniture needed such as desks for learning centers, table for science display, stand for plant, bookcase(s), room divider, portable chalkboard, or wheeled table or cart.

B. **Room Decoration**

1. Prepare colorful, attractive bulletin boards:

a. Start early; it takes longer than you would expect.

b. Some schools have rolls of scalloped corrugated paper for borders as well as pin-tack plastic letters. Inquire.

c. Make bulletin boards functional, not merely decorative. They should relate to material to be covered the first week or two.

d. Consider a theme or color scheme for a month, such as Winnie the Pooh, Sesame Street, Knights of the Round Table, or orange-yellow-red-brown color scheme.

e. Prepare a birthday chart, with pupils' names listed appropriately.

f. Consider decorating one bulletin board or wall space with only a border and title on which pupils' work can be immediately displayed.

g. Someplace, either in the hall beside the door or on bulletin board or wall space, have a display including each child's name, such as "A Bunch of Good Apples" with each child's name written on an apple.

2. Display any pertinent pictures, posters, charts, and maps.

3. Consider a plant or two and possibly even an aquarium (if you know enough about tropical fish to care for them adequately).

4. Don't limit displays merely to bulletin boards. Consider other areas, too: (1) on cupboard and closet doors, (2) above sink, and (3) inside of door to hallway. Don't clutter the walls.

## C. Organizing Material

1. Instructional Materials:

   a. Determine what the school has in the way of the following that you may use:

      (1) Extra workbooks.

      (2) Commercially prepared spirit masters (for seatwork activities).

      (3) Textbooks no longer in use.

      (4) Idea/activity books.

   b. Determine whether the school has school supply catalogs and whether there is any discretionary money with which to purchase needed material such as spirit masters, bulletin board materials, etc.

   c. Advertisements in recent issues of Learning and/or Instructor magazines can also provide ideas.

   d. Ask fellow teachers for recommendations of supplementary material they've found useful.

   e. Check the local library for books or magazines that will go with units of study in the first several weeks.

   f. Attend garage sales, which are often inexpensive sources for paperback books.

   g. Examine teacher's manuals and note worksheets, games, devices, or other suggested learning activities for first several weeks. Make appropriate teaching aids.

   h. Construct learning centers ahead of time that can be used once school is underway.

2. Supplementary Materials:

a. File folders for district and school materials.

(1) Policy handbook.

(2) Communications from principal, superintendent, and other supervisors.

(3) Communications from professional organizations such as NEA.

b. Boxes for curricular areas or months:

(1) Pre-made bulletin boards.

(2) Games and devices.

(3) Visual aids (pictures, illustrations).

(4) Sample art projects.

(5) Seatwork sheets.

(6) Ideas for activities.

(7) Charts, maps, graphs.

(8) Playground games.

(9) Indoor recess games.

(10) Party games.

c. File folders for instructional material:

(1) One for each chapter, topic, or unit.

(a) Seatwork sheets.

(b) List of available resources and ideas.

(2) Consider "daily" seatwork folders (one for each day of the week).

d. Notebooks or binders. These are handy for keeping lists of skills taught in reading and/or math.

3. "Junk"--collect and save everything. Almost any kind of junk can be used creatively and educationally.

a. Sample wallpaper books.

b. Styrofoam egg cartons.

c. Styrofoam meat containers.

d. Pringle cans.

e. Toilet tissue cores.

f. Paper towel cores.

g. Carpet squares.

h. Rags and fabric scraps.

i. Computer paper.

j. Blank newsprint from local newspaper or printer.

k. Aluminum TV dinner trays and pie pans.

l. Banners or signs from grocery store displays.

m. Old magazines, particularly ones with big pictures, photos, or colorful ads.

n. Large cartons: TV, refrigerator, stove.

o. File cards written on only one side.

p. Baby food jars for paint (to put in easel trays).

q. Christmas and other holiday greeting cards.

r. Milk cartons of all sizes.

## D. Discipline, Control, and Management

1. Formulate a few concise rules for expected behavior in the classroom. Don't assume pupils know what is expected.

a. Inexperienced teachers should choose only rules they "can't live without" and are willing to enforce consistently.

b. State rules positively, such as:

(1) Listen attentively.

(2) Raise your hand, and wait to be recognized.

(3) Walk while inside the school.

c. Consider writing these on a poster for display and discussion the first day of school.

2. Formulate the specific consequences for failure to follow a rule.

   a. Include only those consequences that are to be used consistently with all children.

   b. Include one initial warning.

   c. Have a series of consequences, light to severe, and not just a single consequence.

   d. Consult experienced teachers and/or the principal.

   e. Display the consequences along with rules for behavior.

3. Formulate some positive ways to reinforce good behavior.

   a. Have some reinforcers (such as stickers, awards, or notes to parents) for both individuals and the whole class.

   b. Consult other teachers for suggestions, but don't use ideas costing significant amounts of money.

   c. Set goals or standards, and specify what will happen when these are followed or met.

**E. Routines and Procedures**

1. Plan some organizational method for handling pupils' papers. Have baskets, folders, stationary mailboxes, or large envelopes ready for pupils' papers. Half-gallon milk cartons can be stapled together, or gallon cans can be stacked within a wooden frame or super-glued together.

2. After checking the district report card system, formulate a tentative grading system for each subject.

   a. Talk with other teachers.

   b. Decide what will be graded--<u>all</u> daily work or only tests. In areas such as handwriting, spelling, and written composition, decide whether work in other curricular areas (reading, science, social studies) will be evaluated or only work done specifically in those particular assignments will be graded.

   c. Decide how and when to communicate the grading system to the pupils.

   d. Decide whether the parents need to be informed about the grading system.

3. Formulate several routines for each of the following:

   a. Lining up to leave the room at lunch, recess, and dismissal. Use ways in addition to pupil gender or which row is quiet/ready first.

   b. Distributing, turning in, and picking up assignments.

   c. Sharpening pencils.

   d. Using bathroom.

   e. Placing name and date on assignments.

   f. Taking the lunch count.

   g. Recording assignments given and date due.

4. Determine whether pupil helpers will be used, what tasks pupils can be responsible for, how helpers will be determined, and for how long a pupil will hold a particular job. Have the chart ready on the first day. Consider these activities/areas:

   a. Mid-morning milk.

   b. Flag salute.

   c. Playground equipment.

   d. Message delivery.

   e. Classroom lights.

   f. Line leader.

   g. Pencil sharpening.

   h. Classroom calendar.

   i. Classroom librarian.

   j. Paper passer.

   k. Restroom monitor.

   l. Chalkboard erasing.

   m. Windows and blinds.

   n. Plants.

   o. Lunch count.

## F. Class Lists/Rosters

1. Prepare a blank class roster on a ditto master with names on the left and columns on the right. Reproduce numerous copies to use for:

   a. Recording assignments.

   b. Placing book orders.

   c. Recording picture money.

   d. Checking field trip permission slips.

   e. Assigning classroom jobs.

   f. Listing skills mastered.

2. Consider writing girls' names in one color and boys' names in another as some school reports require names listed separately by sex.

3. Don't record names and other information in the grade book for at least one full week, because some pupils may be changed from room to room, or pupils may enter school several days late.

4. Consider preparing a file card for each child with basic data on it such as name, address, phone, birthdate, and WHICH BUS THEY RIDE (so there are no mix-ups the first several days).

## G. Communicating with Home and Pupils

1. Consider either sending a note or a letter to the home or to the pupils, or phoning them.

   a. Letters to the home might include:

      (1) Something about your background.

      (2) Some activities that are planned for the year.

      (3) An explanation of the grading system.

      (4) An open invitation for them to visit the classroom.

      (5) Your sincere desire for good school-home communication throughout the year.

      (6) An invitation for parents to share their information or skills with your pupils when and if appropriate.

      (7) A discussion of the homework policy.

      (8) A suggestion or two on how those at home can help children with school work.

(9) A list of supplies needed.

(10) A calendar of special school dates.

Caution: Don't overwhelm the parents; keep the letter brief. Don't include information that is readily available elsewhere (local newspaper, school policy handbook, school newsletter); make your letter specific to your room.

b. Notes or postcards to pupils might mention:

(1) A personal and positive welcome.

(2) Something they'll be studying during the first part of the year.

(3) Something special children can bring to share the first day or so of class.

c. If stamps are too expensive, consider substituting a phone call.

d. Some teachers feel a home visit is valuable, particularly in kindergarten and grade 1.

e. Consider a progress report to be sent home regularly (weekly?) the first several weeks of school.

(1) Could be merely praise for good work. Consider giving one to each pupil for some positive accomplishment, no matter how small.

(2) Might be a brief checklist of work habits or level of accomplishments. Could include a line for parental signature with the form to be returned the following school day.

## H. Folder for Substitute Teacher

1. Start a folder for a substitute teacher. Include at least the following:

a. Daily schedule including special teachers (art, music, P.E., library, etc.)

b. Names of pupils who leave the room to go to special teachers (LD, instrumental music, speech therapy) and times they should leave and return.

c. Seating chart or class roster with comments about pupils with special needs. These might include hearing loss, limited English, epilepsy, or allergies.

2. Consider including several appropriate spirit masters that could be reproduced quickly and used for seatwork.

## I. Celebrations

1. Consider a birthday poster of some kind. It could be a "birthday train" with each car representing a month, a flower with a petal for each month, etc. Summer birthdays could be celebrated in one of these ways:

   a. In May, the last month of school.

   b. In a month when there are no birthdays.

   c. In a month of the pupil's choice.

2. Make or buy a birthday card or birthday-gram for each child prior to the child's birthday, and file in an accessible place. All pupils in the room could sign the card/gram.

3. Plan how you want to celebrate birthdays:

   a. Consult school handbook on party policies, including refreshments.

   b. Determine whether you want to present each child with a small gift like a pencil or bookmark.

   c. Determine whether you want to give special privileges such as being first in line, choosing a song or activity, etc.

   d. Determine whether, for primary grade pupils, you want a decorated "birthday chair," a paper crown, a lighted candle, etc.

   e. Decide how and when to sing "Happy Birthday."

4. Many primary grade teachers have a "Lost Tooth Club," but many other teachers question whether this is wise and desirable. They feel that it discriminates against children who are maturing more slowly and won't lose teeth until the next summer or year. These children may feel bad about something over which they have no control. Similarly, it may honor others for no real reason.

## J. Pupil Identification

1. Prepare name tags:

   a. Make name tags for each child. Have them worn in the room (but not at recess where they may get torn) the first week.

   b. Desk tags can be handled two ways:

      (1) Many teachers recommend having name tags on desks when pupils arrive the first day. If you do this, then also make a seating chart.

      (2) Some teachers like to have pupils make their own desk tags the first day. This can serve as a printing lesson.

c. Affix name tag to desk so the teacher can read it easily.

d. Put bus number on tag if child rides a bus.

e. Also make name tags for other areas in your room, such as pupil lockers, cubby holes, and coat hangers.

## IV. INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

Long-range plans for all curricular areas are imperative if instruction is to be organized, systematic, and efficient. Too many beginning teachers ask themselves on Sunday evening, "What am I going to do in social studies/health/language arts this week?" Teaching then tends to become routine, textbook-shackled, and possibly even disorganized. A chapter may never get finished, important skills may never get mastered, and worthwhile learning experiences may get ignored. As a result, children's learning may suffer, and the teacher constantly feels harried, unfocused, and perplexed.

The first stage of long-range planning is becoming acquainted with the assigned textbooks or curriculum guides as covered in the first section of this handbook, "Using This Handbook." Then, in each major curricular area, teachers should systematically prepare the following:

1. A rough schedule for the year.

2. A "skeleton" plan for the first several weeks of school.

3. Detailed lesson plans implementing the "skeleton" plan.

American education is committed to providing for individual differences among pupils. And even though neophyte teachers are not expected to individualize instruction, they can, during the first week or so, make some objective and specific initial assessments of pupil achievement in a variety of areas. To collect accurate information most efficiently, teachers must deliberately incorporate some data collection procedures into their daily lesson plans. This could be done with a review of last year's spelling words, a timed test on basic math facts, preparation of written answers to a basal reader story, or by other means. Some beginning teachers may be skillful enough to administer information reading inventories or to construct informal skills tests.

Some way of recording this information is necessary. Then teachers should compare and synthesize it with other available information such as that found in cumulative records or shared by previous teachers. Such procedures will give the inexperienced teacher much insight into the pupil's capabilities and needs and will help during planning of an instructional program.

### A. Plans and Schedules

1. Long-Range Planning:

   a. Before school begins, become acquainted with topics that will be covered during the year in each subject, particularly social studies and science.

   b. Make a rough schedule for the year for each curricular area, particularly social studies and science. A sample plan of a rough schedule for the first nine weeks of a second grade social studies class is shown on the next page.

**Nine-Week Sample Schedule**

**2nd Grade Social Studies**

Unit 1 - "Who Am I?"*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| August | 30 | - | Get acquainted; self-collage |
| September | 1 | | " |
| September | 3 | | " |
| September | 6 | - | Labor Day; no school |
| September | 8 | - | "Who Are You?" |
| September | 10 | | " |
| September | 13 | - | "How Am I Unique?" |
| September | 15 | | " |
| September | 17 | | " |
| September | 20 | - | "My Voice" |
| September | 22 | - | "My Feelings" |
| September | 24 | | " |
| September | 27 | - | "I Look . . . " |
| September | 29 | | " |
| October | 1 | - | "I Am . . . " |
| October | 4 | | " |
| October | 6 | - | "Sanford's Story" |
| October | 8 | | " |
| October | 11 | | " |
| October | 13 | - | "My Needs" |
| October | 15 | - | "Safety" |
| October | 18 | - | "Believe" |
| October | 20 | | " |
| October | 22 | - | Columbus Day** |
| October | 25 | - | "Love" |
| October | 27 | - | "Know" |
| October | 29 | - | Halloween** |

*9 weeks; 24 teaching days in unit--Monday, Wednesday, Friday

**Will study Columbus and Halloween rather than the assigned topic.

c. In drawing up this rough schedule, consider the following:

(1) Visit with other grade level teachers for their suggestions.

(2) If it makes no difference where in the year the topic comes, put the topics you consider most important or "teachable" early enough in the year that you won't omit or slight them late in the semester or the year. Note that sometimes topics are sequential (built upon previous ones) or are more appropriate for older (end-of-the-year) children than for younger (beginning-of-the-year) ones.

(3) To the extent possible, make schedules conform to the school calendar. Take into consideration:

(a) Grading periods.

(b) Holidays, vacations, and breaks.

(c) In-service days.

(4) Knowing what children have studied in each curricular area during the previous grade should help when determining how much time should be spent on units/topics. Therefore, examine the curriculum for the previous grade to see how it might affect the long-range schedule.

d. For each curricular area, consider stating several goals that will be addressed during the year as well as the content that will be covered. When devising the calendar, try to match these goals either to content or to instructional approaches.

e. It is important not to over-schedule yourself. Leave some time for the following:

(1) Review near the end of a unit/chapter.

(2) Plan re-instruction following a unit/chapter in case skills weren't mastered.

(3) Make up for unexpected occurrences such as school closing because of snow.

f. For each major topic, start a list of several possible learning experiences/activities:

(1) Field trips.

(2) Resource people.

(3) Media.

(4) Games.

(5) Assignments.

(6) Bulletin boards.

(7) Learning centers.

(8) Special books.

This is particularly important for the second set of units/topics that will be taught so that you can begin preparing for them and not get caught in the "weekend-before-a-new-unit" rush.

2. "Skeleton" Plans: For each curricular area, draw up a skeleton plan covering the first several weeks of school. Include more details than in your yearly calendar but fewer than needed for lesson plans. A sample month-long skeleton plan for a three-group reading arrangement is shown on the next page.

3. Daily Lesson Plans.

a. Write detailed daily lesson plans for each curricular area for the first week.

b. Consider keeping them rather traditional until you are confident you have adequate pupil control.

c. Keep within the time limits of daily schedule.

d. Plan a brief additional correlated activity for each area shou lesson not take as long as planned.

4. Daily Schedule: Construct tentative daily and weekly schedules.

a. Use graph paper so proportion and balance are evident.

b. Include special teachers and activities like P.E., music, art, and library.

c. Include time for clean-up, coats, etc., at noon and end of day.

d. Include regular time, possibly daily, for individual instruction and assistance.

e. If some pupils leave before others (bus pupils), plan what to do after they leave.

f. Post the schedule conspicuously in the room.

SAMPLE LONG-RANGE SKELETON* PLAN IN READING

| Group | 1 2 3 4 5 | 8 9 10 11 12 | 15 16 17 18 19 | 22 23 24 25 26 | 29 30 1 2 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| "Eagles"<br>Step Right Up<br>Section 2 | "The Big Day"<br>"Baby in Clock"<br>Workbook 32-36<br>Extension:<br>making own maps | "Patsy & the C.B."<br>Workbook 37-38<br>Skill lessons:<br>sequence<br>directions<br>Creative writing:<br>"An Emergency" | "Amy's Family"<br>"Children's Garden"<br>Workbook 39-44<br>Skill lessons:<br>root words<br>realism/fantasy<br>Enrichment:<br>planting bean seeds | "Mandy's Grandmother"<br>Workbook 45-48<br>Skill lessons:<br>context clues<br>syllabication | "Little Boy's Secret"<br>"The Queen Who . . ."<br>Workbook 49-51<br>Skill lessons:<br>prefixes<br>Enrichment:<br>dramatize "LBS" |
| "Robins"<br>Ride a Rainbow<br>Section 2 | "Jack & Beanstalk"<br>workbook 27-29<br>Skill lessons:<br>oo sounds<br>guide words<br>Extension:<br>dramatize "JAB" | "String Beans"<br>"Mariko Goes to Camp"<br>Workbook 30-35<br>Skill lessons:<br>cause-effect<br>ou-ow words<br>Enrichment:<br>planting bean seeds | "Pollution"<br>Workbook 36-37<br>Skill lessons:<br>bar graphs<br>Enrichment:<br>making own bar graphs | "Well?"<br>"Spring Whispers"<br>Workbook 38-42<br>Skill lessons:<br>root words<br>vocabulary<br>Enrichment:<br>seasonal poems | "Which One is Mine?"<br>"Paper Animals"<br>Workbook 43-48<br>Skill lessons:<br>glossary<br>syllabication<br>Enrichment:<br>puppet show of "WOIM" |
| "Mud Hens"<br>Hootenany<br>Section 2 | "Visit to Dairy Farm"<br>Workbook 47-49<br>Skill lessons:<br>r-controlled vowels<br>cause-effect<br>Extension:<br>farm collage | "Magic Glasses"<br>"Eddie . . ."<br>Workbook 50-55<br>Skill lessons:<br>main ideas<br>compound words<br>Enrichment:<br>chart "What We Read" | "The Bed Just So"<br>"Grandpa . . ."<br>Workbook 56-61<br>Skill lessons:<br>silent letters<br>multi-meaning words<br>Extension:<br>choral reading of "Bed Just So" | "Jobs With Dogs"<br>Workbook 62-64<br>Skill lessons:<br>understanding motives<br>suffixes ful & ly<br>Enrichment:<br>oral reports on dogs | "Kate's Swimming . . ."<br>"Carrots . . ."<br>Workbook 65-69<br>Skill lessons:<br>context clues<br>reading a map |

*A "skeleton" plan is a brief overview of intended accomplishments.
It is a general, flexible, guide; it is not a pledge or a commitment.

5. Supplemental Materials.

a. Ahead of time, prepare some activities to be used when plans don't take as long as expected, when the weather is too severe and a change of plans is necessary, when the music teacher is three minutes late, when children finish early, or when there is extra time at the end of the day. Place descriptions of these activities and related materials in a card file, folder, or small box. Some types of activities that you might want to include are these:

(1) Puzzles.

(2) Seatwork pages.

(3) Educational games.

(4) Fingerplays (K-1).

(5) Choral readings.

(6) Crossword puzzles.

(7) Discussion questions.

(8) Creative writing.

(9) Stories and poems to read aloud.

(10) Fun art activities.

(11) Riddles.

(12) Word searches.

(13) Brain stretchers.

(14) Strange-but-true facts.

b. Consider preparing one or more learning centers if you believe you can incorporate them into your organizational/instructional scheme. These are excellent both for basic instruction and for times when work is finished early. However, most experienced teachers recommend NOT using them the first week or so until you have control of and can manage the class. Most schools have professional libraries that will have books with ideas for learning centers, or you can contact an experienced teacher.

## B. Pupil Assessment

1. Prepare some procedures to help when tentatively determining at which level pupils are working, particularly in skill areas such as:

   a. Math.

   b. Reading.

   c. Spelling.

   d. Composition.

   e. Handwriting.

   f. Listening.

2. Assessment procedures that are appropriate include:

   a. Pre-tests.

   b. Review lessons.

   c. Worksheets.

   e. Oral activities.

3. Prepare some kind of checklist so that some basic information revealed by your evaluation can quickly be recorded. Teacher's manuals frequently contain good examples.

   a. Keep it simple for initial information. Charts such as the one displayed below are useful.

| Spelling | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Top 1/3 | Middle 1/3 | Low 1/3 |
| Andrea | | x | |
| Bryan | x | | |
| Cathy | | | x |

   b. Compare this initial assessment data with other available information in the cumulative record folder. Consider discussing any major discrepancies or puzzlements with other teachers, particularly the pupil's previous teacher, or the principal.

c. Don't form permanent opinions of pupils based only on initial data. Keep an open mind.

4. Begin thinking how this information can be used in constructing lesson plans, making assignments, planning learning experiences, and forming instructional groups. Assessment data should be used, not just collected.

## V. CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of this handbook is to help assure better pupil learning. American schools and their teachers are being heavily criticized, and numerous studies have indicated that some aspects of achievement have declined in recent years. Quality research has singled out the beginning of the school year as being remarkably crucial in determining pupil learning, pupil control/management, and even teacher burn-out. All educators--teachers and administrators--seriously need to reassess how the school year is begun and what kind and quality of preparation is needed to make it sound and effective.

The intent of this handbook has been to provide structure, system, stimulation, and assistance to help inexperienced teachers be the best teachers they can be so their pupils will learn as much as they possibly can. We know this handbook did not make their preparation easier, but we hope it made it better.

While the suggestions in this handbook will not lessen the effort necessary for adequate before-school-starts teacher preparation, we do hope that following the handbook's guidance will result in better prepared and more self-confident teachers than would have happened otherwise.

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